

She is Going

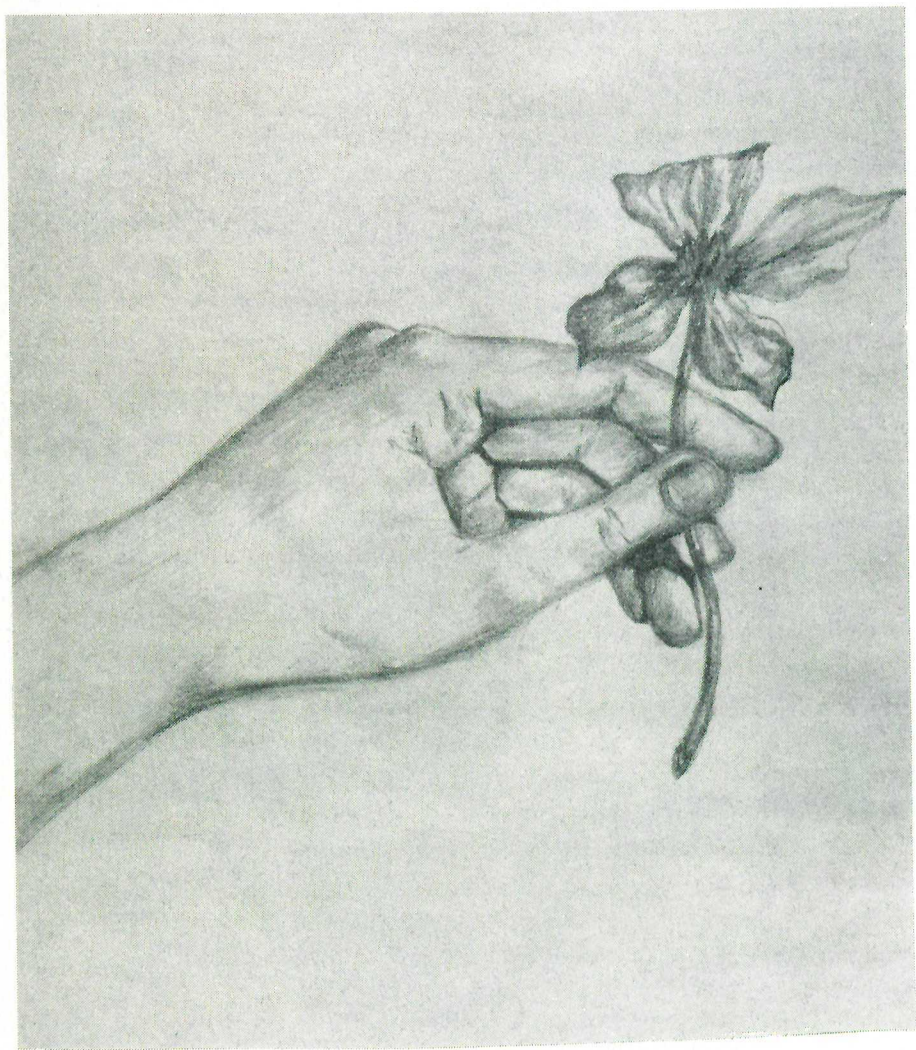
Her shrunken fingers
cling to my steady hand as she
stares up into my eyes
and I wonder if she can read my mind.
“Why not?” I think, since
she always read my mother’s
and my aunt’s and my uncle’s.
Fads change with each new era but really
every child thinks the same.
And after all, I am only
the tenth one to pass through her.

I wander through the years
of biscuits and gravy, barbecue and
homegrown corn and tomatoes to the
catnaps and afternoon “stories” to
all the nights of Johnny Carson. And
I know all that has changed.
Johnny is now Dave and I fear
she thinks I no longer care—

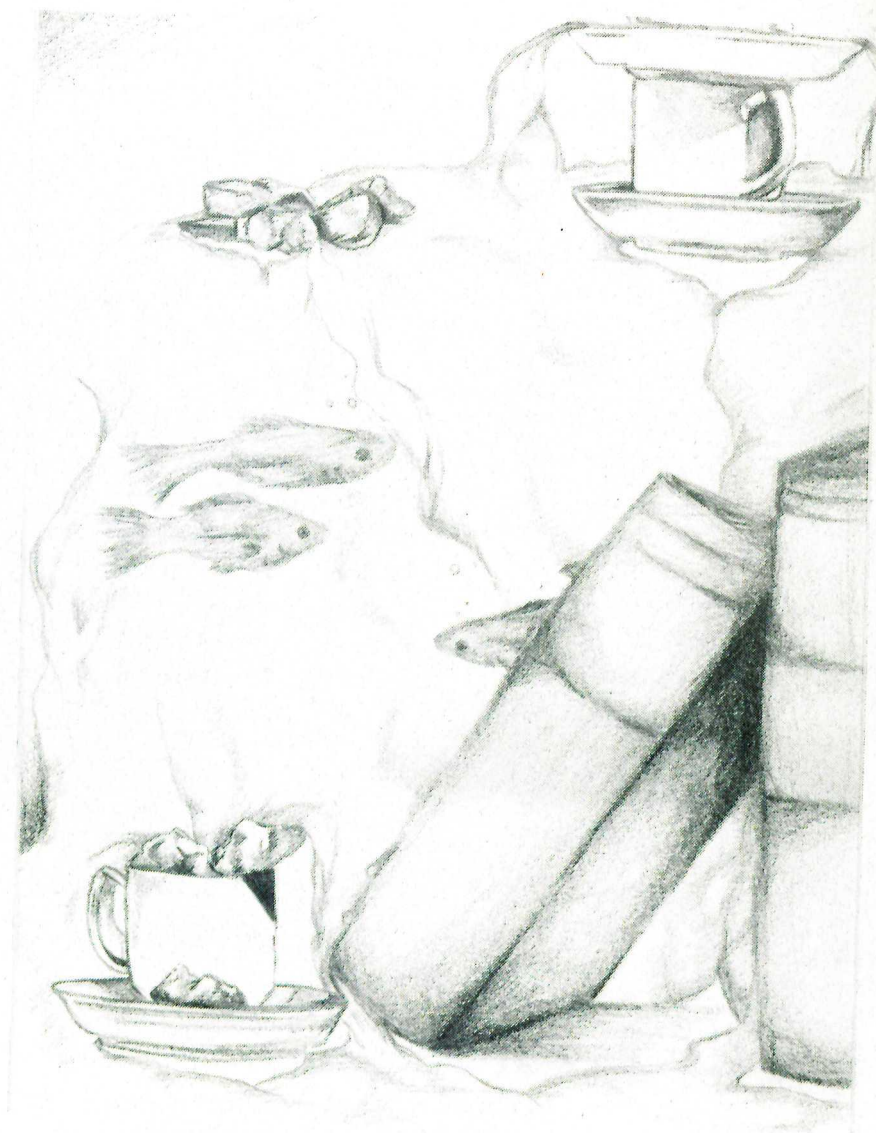
I hear her reminder to “be good” and I
am back in the sterile pre-op room where she lies
in the tears that fell on the flowers of her surgical gown.
She tells me she’d be ready to die
if she only knew
she’d lived righteously enough to make it
through the pearly gates to the better land beyond....
I wonder, if her perfect model and lesson to me of
industriousness, piety, and love
doesn’t gain God’s grace, then
how will He judge me?
Both Grandma and I know, though,
I am young and have years left to live so
there’s no need for worry now.

For a final moment I forget about *my* pain and focus
on her watery, drowsy eyes. She sees my
sympathetic, agonizing smile
slowly frees my hand and
slurs an “I love you”
as I walk away.

Sarah Neal



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